

Shaykh Abu'l Hudā Muḥammad al-Yáqūbī on Imām Aḥmed Riḍā Khān

Transcript of a section from the interview on Takbeer TV¹

...great Ḥanbali scholars or great Sufi masters, great men of Allāh. Imām Aḥmed ibn Ḥanbal himself believed in seeking the *barakah*² of RasūlAllāh *ṣallAllāhu alayhi wa ālihī wa sallam*, in visiting the grave of RasūlAllāh *ṣallAllāhu alayhi wa ālihī wa sallam*, believed in the weak ḥadīth being valid proofs in the field of *sharī'ah* and in the narration of the *mūjizāt* and the *faḍayil*,³ unlike modern Hanbalites. Even back to 50 years ago...70 years ago, the greatest Hanbalite scholars in Syria were great sufis. Many of them were Shādhilis, for example.

So followers - true followers - of these four madh'habs,⁴ the majority of the *ummah*, I would say, to add to this - here you could filter who is a Ḥanafī, who is a Ḥanbalī – they should be at the same time, followers of Imām Abu'l Ḥasan al-Ashārī and the followers of Imām Abū Manṣūr al-Māturīdī in their explanation of *āqīdah*.⁵

Now, we follow RasūlAllāh *ṣallAllāhu alayhi wa ālihī wa sallam* in everything. In our *fiqh*,⁶ in our *āqīdah*, we follow RasūlAllāh *ṣallAllāhu alayhi wa ālihī wa sallam*. But, in *fiqh*, we follow his way of *ibādah*⁷ as presented to us and as interpreted to us, by these imāms; in *āqīdah*, we follow the *āqīdah* of RasūlAllāh *ṣallAllāhu alayhi wa ālihī wa sallam* but, as presented to us, explained to us, by Imām Abu'l Ḥasan al-Ashārī and Imām Abū Manṣūr al-Māturīdī. Both of them came in a dark time, when Ahlu's Sunnah were oppressed, and they advocated the doctrine of Ahlu's Sunnah wa'l Jamā'ah.

I would say, for example, in the Indian sub-continent,⁸ if you love Imām Aḥmed Riḍā Khān, you are from Ahlu's Sunnah wa'l Jamā'ah; I would say, for example, in the Middle-East and North Africa, if you love Shaykh Yūsuf an-Nab'hānī, you are from Ahlu's Sunnah wa'l Jamā'ah. If you are against Al-Imām al-Shaykh Yūsuf an-Nab'hānī, you are against Ahlu's Sunnah wa'l Jamā'ah. [...] you are familiar with Al-Imām Shaykh Yūsuf an-Nab'hānī. He was the best lover of RasūlAllāh *ṣallAllāhu alayhi wa ālihī wa sallam* who authored dozens of books in praise of RasūlAllāh *ṣallAllāhu alayhi wa ālihī wa sallam*; in prayers of RasūlAllāh *ṣallAllāhu alayhi wa ālihī wa sallam*; in description of RasūlAllāh *ṣallAllāhu alayhi wa ālihī wa sallam* and on, and on, and on...

So these people can distinguish; by following them, we know who we are, and by attacking them or criticizing them, we know who the other parties are. That is probably in a nutshell, defined for our modern viewers. If we go back in history, for example, anyone who criticizes Imām Ghazzālī, puts a question mark in front of him, he doesn't belong to Ahlu's Sunnah.

Interviewer: Any scholarly personality from the indo-pak subcontinent that you personally have been inspired by, or you studied, or you...?

Well, definitely. The Muslim *ummah* is one body. And the scholars from the east and the west of Ahlu's Sunnah belong to one tree. Now, it has many branches, and we are connected to each other, exactly like tissues belonging to one body.

¹ This being an informal talk, and not a prepared speech, there are unfinished sentences and sometimes, the shaykh changes the tense mid-sentence or breaks away to say something else. The entire talk is transcribed faithfully here, except in a few places where a preposition or a pronoun has been modified to correct the sentence. This clip was available on Youtube and other video sites made available by sunnitalk.co.uk

² munificence, grace.

³ on miracles, and virtues or superiority of certain people, places or things.

⁴ schools

⁵ creed, doctrine.

⁶ jurisprudence – the Islamic law of permissible and forbidden.

⁷ worship

⁸ the Shaykh says "Sub-Indian continent," which has been changed appropriately.

In the Indian sub-continent, I believe, the most famous of all scholars in modern times, is the great Imām, Aḥmed Riḍā Khān of Bareilly; who was, I would consider the *mujaddid*⁹ of Islam in the Indian sub-continent. Now, to your surprise, I heard of Imām Aḥmed Riḍā Khān from when I was a little boy in Damascus.

Interviewer: That was actually one of the questions: Is Shaykh Ahmed Riḍā linked to any of your teachers or your scholars?

Definitely. I read about Imām Aḥmed Riḍā Khān in the famous work of Sayyid Ábdu'l Ḥayy al-Kattānī, *Fahris al-Fahāris*. Because, Sayyid Ábdu'l Ḥayy al-Kattānī took *ijāzah*¹⁰ from Imām Aḥmed Riḍā Khān. Also, some years ago, I believe, approximately ten years ago, I read in the *Riḥlah*¹¹ of As-Sayyid Muḥammad az-Zamzamī al-Kattānī; I got a copy of it...a manuscript in 1997, and then it was published - or parts of it were published in *Dirāsāt al-Islāmiyyah* magazine in Pakistan. And he mentions the encounters between his father, the great muhaddith of *Al-Maghrib*,¹² As-Sayyid Muḥammad ibn Jāfar al-Kattānī; the father of my teacher [and] my father's teacher, As-Sayyid Muḥammad al-Makkī al-Kattānī.¹³

The encounters between Sayyid Muḥammad ibn Jāfar al-Kattānī and Sayyid¹⁴ Aḥmed Riḍā Khān of Bareilly, in Al-Madīnah al-Munawwarah. And he refers to his book *Ad-Dawlah al-Makkiyyah*, on the knowledge of RasūlAllāh *ṣallāllāhu alayhi wa ālihi wa sallam*, how vast it is and how he was given the knowledge of everything. As I said, Sayyid Muḥammad ibn Jāfar al-Kattānī wrote a book on the same subject in three volumes *Jilā'a*¹⁵ *al-Qulubi mina'l Aṣḍā-yi'l Ghaybiyyah bi Ihāṭatihi* *alayhi's ṣalātu wa's salām mina'l Ūlūmi'l Kawniyyah*. A three volume work which was published recently in Egypt.

So my first encounters with Sayyid Aḥmed Riḍā Khān were in my father's library. Because he had a small work, very tiny but of great significance called *Al-Mujmal al-Muáddid fī Ta'ālīf al-Mujaddid*.¹⁶ It was an index of the books which Imām Aḥmed Riḍā Khān *rahimahullāhu tāālā wa raḍiya anhu* authored and published during his lifetime in India, in the Indian writing style - lithography - and it has sections on his books, in Arabic, in Urdu, in Persian, and books on Tafsir, books on Ūlūm al-Qur'ān, Ūlūm al-Fiqh, Ūlūm al-Ḥadīth and so on.

So these are the early encounters with Shaykh Aḥmed Riḍā Khān *rahimahullāhu tāālā wa raḍiya anhu*. And then later on, I learned more and more about his works. The first book I got of his is, *Ad-Dawlah al-Makkiyyah bi'l Māddati'l Ghaybiyyah*. And I read it twice; and benefitted from it a lot and enjoyed reading it and one of the best works on this subject. I referred now to the book of As-Sayyid Muḥammad ibn Jāfar al-Kattānī, it is a vast work, very elaborate work, and adds also a lot of information on the same subject.

I read several of his¹⁷ works later on and was very deeply affected by reading his book which was translated into the English language. I was given actually, six months ago, as a gift; one of the brothers gave me the first volume of *Al-Malfūzat*¹⁸ in English.

And I was reading it in Birmingham while I was a guest of the Muslim community there; and this is like, before *fajr*¹⁹ time and I was in the state of rapture reading his fatwas, reading his comments on the Awliyā ... reading his ... I was in rapture, I went into the state of *takbir*, Allāhu Akbar, Allāhu Akbar, Allāhu Akbar,

⁹ Mujaddid: reviver of religion, renewer of faith. A scholar who revitalizes the community.

¹⁰ Ijāzah: authorization to narrate.

¹¹ Travelogue

¹² Morocco

¹³ That is, Shaykh Muḥammad al-Makkī al-Kattānī is the son of Shaykh Muḥammad Jāfar al-Kattānī; and that Shaykh Muḥammad al-Makkī al-Kattānī is the teacher of Shaykh Abū'l Hudā al-Yāqūbi and his father, Shaykh Ibrāhīm al-Yāqūbi.

¹⁴ Surely, the Shaykh doesn't mean 'sayyid' as in descendant of the Prophet ṣallāllāhu alayhi wa sallam. Rather 'sayyid' as a respectful term, meaning 'master' or simply a slip of the tongue as he is naming so many sayyids.

¹⁵ The print edition of the book says *Jalā'a al-Qulūb* on the title page.

¹⁶ This was compiled by Alahazrat's student, Mawlānā Ḥafaruddīn al-Bihārī.

¹⁷ The shaykh is talking about Imām Aḥmed Riḍā Khān.

¹⁸ *Al-Malfūzāt* is a collection of sayings by Imām Aḥmed Riḍā Khān, compiled by his younger son, Mawlana Muṣṭafā Riḍā Khān.

¹⁹ dawn

for having such a scholar; defending, advocating the doctrine of Ahlu's Sunnah wa'l Jama'ah so strongly, having this deep love of the Awliyā, and the Ūlāma...

I feel *wallāhi*,²⁰ to be honest, I feel like...the... Imām Aḥmed Riḍā Khān and our great shaykhs and their shaykhs in Damascus have drunk from the same river; from the same cup, even. This is what we were taught about... about the *nūr* of RasūlAllāh *ṣallAllāhu alayhi wa ālihī wa sallam*, about our connection and imagining, visualizing, our presence in front of RasūlAllāh *ṣallAllāhu alayhi wa ālihī wa sallam*, about being firm [on] who is Ahlu's Sunnah and who is a deviator and about many issues.

And [we] find Imām Aḥmed Riḍā Khān at that early time really predicted a lot of what is going on now. And wanted to put an end.. he even spoke about, for example, multi-faith dialogue - in [that] *Al-Malfuzat*. I was very happy to read this; as early as that time, writing and warning of it; warning of it, how it is going on now. Because multifaith dialogue for us is *dāwah* – is a way of *dāwah*.²¹ Presenting Islam or showing people the true way of Islam, the true nature of Islam. Rather than making concessions about our deen, as people are doing now.

So, I went to bed after *ḍuḥā* time, after sunrise...sometime; and I saw, Imām Aḥmed Riḍā Khān in my dream. And this was like the peak; I was in rapture, in joy - and I said *subḥānAllāh*.²² It has happened to me several times, I read about scholars, or I read their books, or make mention of them, or I narrate their *isnāds*²³ and then I see them in my dreams. And about Imām Aḥmed Riḍā Khān, it was like the top of joy... seeing him.

And I believe, Muslims in the Indian sub-continent were given this great bounty from Allāh *subḥānahu wa tāālā* by having this scholar, who was a great scholar of fiqh, great scholar of hadith, a great scholar of the Arabic language, and a great poet himself. I think he mastered every discipline²⁴ and his books show the level of his knowledge.

Interviewer: I would add to it, a great faqih. If you see the great works, that the shaykh has compiled in the subject of fiqh, it is amazing. You think yourself that...SubḥānAllāh?

Exactly. One of his teachers, and very famous in the *isnāds* of the people of *shām*²⁵ is Mawlānā Faḍlu'r Raḥmān ibn Ahlullāh al-Kunjmuradabadi²⁶ who died in the year 1314.²⁷ It is told that Imām Aḥmed Riḍā Khān met him and took his *ijāzah*, and Mawlānā Faḍlu'r Raḥmān took his turban and put it on the head of Mawlānā Aḥmed Riḍā Khān. Mawlānā Faḍlu'r Raḥmān is the teacher of the teacher of our teachers.

Interviewer: So there is that very tight link between scholars...

Ahlu's Sunnah are one body, wherever you go.

²⁰ by Allāh

²¹ Inviting others to Islām.

²² Glory to Allah

²³ Chain of Narration or Chain of Authorization, particularly

²⁴ The shaykh means to say, disciplines of Islamic Sciences.

²⁵ Shām: Levantine. Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and Palestine.

²⁶ Ganj Murādābādī. But due to the absence of the guttural 'g' in Arabic, it is replaced with 'k'.

²⁷ By other accounts, he passed away in 1313 AH.

